

CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM,

SACRAMENTS OF THE

COVENANT OF GRACE,

BEING A CANDID CONSIDERATION OF THE POINTS AT  
ISSUE BETWEEN

PRESBYTERIANS AND BAPTISTS.

RELATIVE TO BAPTISM—ITS SCOPE—MEANING—MODE,  
AND SUBJECTS,

BY REV. F. K. NASH,

Pastor of Centre Church,

ROBESON COUNTY, N. C.

PRINTED AT THE PRESBYTERIAN OFFICE,

FAYETTEVILLE, N. C.

1859.

BAP  
N249  
copy 1

Donation of the  
Author,  
October 26th, 1859.

---

Library of the Theological Seminary,  
PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by Mr. Samuel Agnew of Philadelphia, Pa.

Agnew Coll. on Baptism, No.

SCB

10253









# CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM,

SACRAMENTS OF THE

## COVENANT OF GRACE,

BEING A CANDID CONSIDERATION OF THE POINTS AT  
ISSUE BETWEEN

PESBYTERIANS AND BAPTISTS.

RELATIVE TO BAPTISM—ITS SCOPE—MEANING—MODE,  
AND SUBJECTS,

BY REV. F. K. <sup>✓</sup>NASH,

Pastor of Centre Church,

ROBESON COUNTY, N. C.



PRINTED AT THE PRESBYTERIAN OFFICE,

FAYETTEVILLE, N. C.

1859.





## ERRATA.

PAGE.	LINE.	
2	2	“particular”—particulars.
“	3	“disciples”—disciple.
4	3	The period should be left out, and
“	“	reference in parenthesis.
8	10	“sea”—seal.
11	13	“sign-token”—sign, token.
18	2d	from bottom.—Period should be at end
“	“	of quotation.
30	14	from bottom.—Paragraph should have
“	“	stopped at “importance.”
33	18	The paragraph should have ended
“	“	with the words “Let the impartial
“	“	reader answer.”
48	7	from bottom.—“ground”—grounds.
“	5	“when”—where.
52	29	“languages”—language.
54	6	“regions”—region.
74	12	“father’s”—father’s.
“	13	“ <i>brepha</i> ”— <i>brephæ</i> .
“	15	“The semicolon after “strange world;”
“	“	instead of comma.
“	17	“save them”—love them.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE.
Introduction.....	vi
The <i>one</i> commission, and what it includes.....	1
Presbyterian Church, abides by its order.....	2
Makes baptizing secondary to teaching and discipling....	3
In this, follows the example of Christ and Paul.....	3
Order of discussion.....	4
<i>One</i> church of God, <i>an essential and fundamental truth</i> .....	5
Why the Church is both <i>visible</i> and <i>invisible</i> .....	6
Why the Church has always had sacraments.....	7
What are Sacraments.....	7
No force without the covenant.....	8
Augustin and Calvin quoted.....	8
The covenant with Abraham Gen. xix shown to be that of Grace.....	9
Argument condensed.....	12
Corollaries.....	13

## CHAPTER II.

Rite of baptism; what it is. ....	15
Agrees with circumcision in five thi gs.....	16
Differs in two.....	16
Augustin quoted.....	17
Does not lie in the outward application of water.....	17
Five things necessary to the outward rite.....	20

Baptism a sacrament to a covenant.....	21
Two changes necessary before man is fit for baptism.....	22
More than an obligation to obedience.....	23
A sign and seal of the covenant.....	24

## CHAPTER III.

Christian baptism a permanent institution.....	26
Nazianzinus and Turtullian.....	26
The mode <i>not essential</i> .....	27
This discussion not an attack, but a defence.....	28
The Baptist church honored.....	29
Spirit of bigotry and high churchism opposed.....	30
Robert Hall and C. H. Spurgeon.....	31
This spirit schismatical.....	32
Our position stated.....	34
Order of discussion.....	35
Our Saviour did not directly teach any particular mode...	35
Reasons for this.....	36
Some places where immersion cannot go as a permanent institution.....	37
The Greek word "Baptizo" in the New Testament when used in connection with baptism refers to the institution, not to the mode of applying the water.....	39
Views of Presbyterian church as stated in her Confession..	40
Calvin and Witsius quoted.....	41
Another view of the case.....	45
The Greek prepositions.....	51

## CHAPTER IV.

Point of agreement between all Christians.....	56
Point at issue, and mode of treating it.....	57
Infants included in the commission.....	57
Infants in the covenant.....	58
The church first organized.....	61
Infants in the church.....	62

## CONTENTS.



The Jewish Church the Church of God.....	62
Infants members of the kingdom of God.....	65
Calvin quoted.....	65
Infants are holy.....	66
Infants baptized in all the early ages of the church.....	67
Calvin, Brown, Augustin, Erasmus.....	68

## O B J E C T I O N S .

No "Express Command" answered.....	69
No "Express Instance" answered.....	71
Cannot exercise faith and repentance answered.....	72
How faith and repentance are prerequisites.....	72
The right of infants to baptism rests precisely upon the same ground with that of adults.....	73
The objection deprives infants of the inheritance of life..	74
The system we oppose.....	77
The system we love.....	78

## INTRODUCTION.



The matter, and much of the form of the present unpretending work, was delivered in Sermons to the people of my charge.

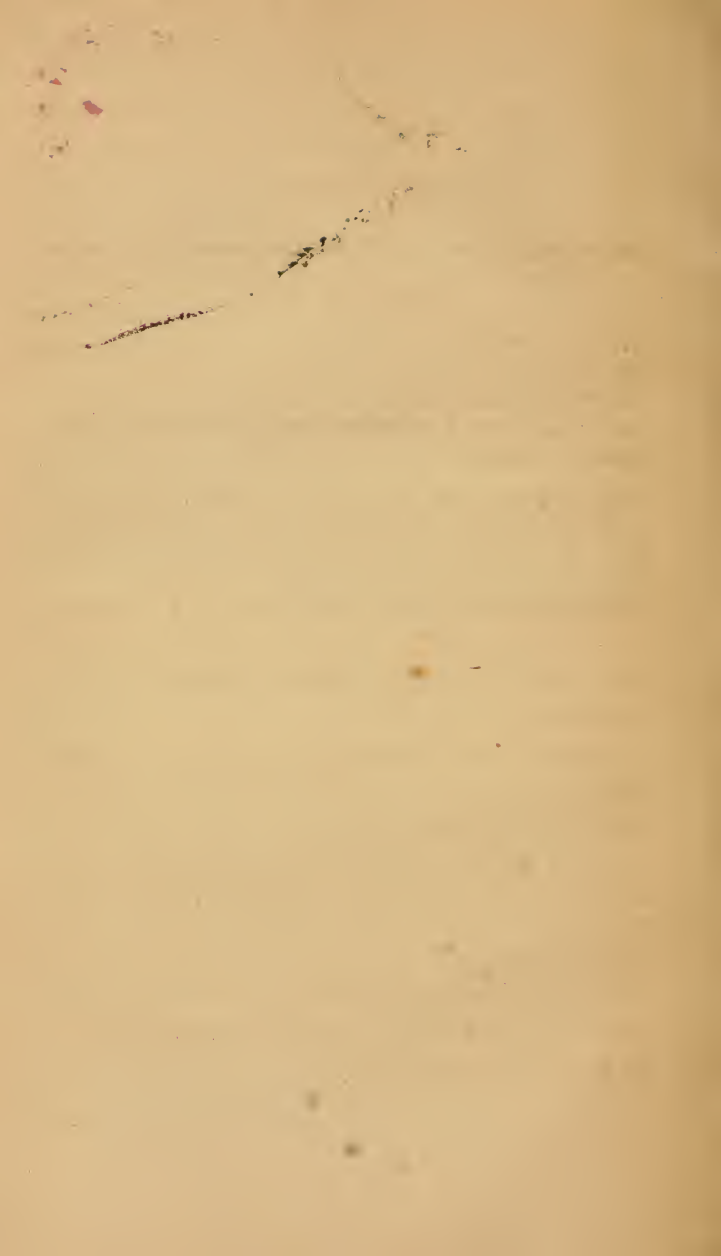
The impression made by these Sermons, on the minds of many of God's dear people, led to the expression of a desire on their part, for their publication.

This desire, communicated with much delicacy and kindness on their part, their Pastor has consented to gratify.

The topics handled have been so often and ably discussed by the first minds the church has produced, that it would be idle to pretend to any originality. Nothing new can be said on either side. The object had in view by the author, has been to condense into as narrow a compass as possible, the Scripture arguments that go to sustain the views and practice of the Presbyterian Church in relation to the Sacraments of Circumcision and Baptism. And, in doing this, he has not hesitated to use the best arguments he has been able to lay his hands on.

He has also, in many places, used the language of others when it has suited his purpose in the plan of his argument, and run with the general current of his thoughts. It has been his constant desire to present his views in such immediate connexion with the Covenant, from which they derive their meaning and efficacy, that the humblest minds might comprehend them. He has avoided prolixity as much as possible, and in every position sought to leave out all side issues, and go directly to the heart of the matter. In doing this, he is aware that many points having an important bearing upon the questions involved, have been left out. But still, he thinks enough has been said to establish the fact, that the Presbyterian Church, in her views and practice, stands upon the ground of the Covenant, and is sustained by all the Scripture.

•







## CHAPTER I.

### CIRCUMCISION A SACRAMENT OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

Matthew xxviii: 19, 20.

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

This is the great commission our Lord and Saviour gave his disciples, when, shortly before his ascension, he sent them forth to teach the nations.

This same commission he gives to all his ministers, in every age, and it alone constitutes a sufficient authority for any of them to preach the Gospel of the Son of God.

Bearing these indentures, they are God’s ambassadors, and may take along with them, wherever they go, the promise, “Lo, I am with you always.”

It is of the first importance, not only that the full meaning of this commission be reached, but also that the mutual bearings and relations of its several parts be distinctly understood. For unless this is done, the ambassador himself will neither know the extent of his credentials, nor the just proportion of the duties devolving upon him.

Now, a careful analysis of this commission will show that it contains the following particular: 1st, Power to teach; 2nd, Authority to disciples; 3rd, A right to baptize; 4th, Authority to require those taught, disciplined, baptized, "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

In this charter of ministerial rights and obligations, it is of importance to observe that "teaching" and "discipling" go before "baptizing," and obedience to the commands of Christ follows after all. By observing this order of Christ's commission, the unity, peace, purity and efficiency of the church are always promoted. By violating that order, schism, dissension and great ecclesiastical inefficiency have invariably ensued.

It has been the glory of the Presbyterian church, that she has ever sought to abide by the teaching of her Saviour, and to observe the order of God's house as given in her commission.

She never baptizes without first *teaching* and *discipling*. But is it asked, "Does she not baptize infants?" Yes, she does; but *never without a fore-running* discipling of one or both parents, and their infants occupying the relation of minor heirs of the covenant of life.

She places baptism *secondary* to teaching and discipling, just as our blessed and wise Master did in the commission. And in this respect she follows his bright and illustrious example; for it is a telling fact,

that though he spent his dear life in indefatigable labor, in teaching and discipling, he never (in all his life on earth) baptized a single individual with water. Jno. iv: 2. And in this respect she follows, too, in the footsteps of Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, for we hear him saying, "I thank God I baptized none of you, but Crispus, and Gaius, and the household of Stephanus." And the reason he gives is this: "For Christ sent me *not to baptize*, but to *preach the Gospel*." What! Christ sent Paul *not to baptize*! Then baptizing is subsidiary to preaching. He, then, who places baptism upon an equality with "teaching and discipling" mars the order of Christ's commission, goes contrary to the example of Christ and the inspired apostles, and in the same degree displeases the Master, and hinders the progress of his cause.

Whether Mr. Monroe in his Sermons "Faith and Baptism," together with all those writers who agree with him, does not do this in the opinion that immersion is the only Scripture mode of baptism—that infants are to be excluded from the church—and that God's acknowledged people are not to be permitted to hold communion together at the Lord's table, unless they believe in immersion baptism, we leave to the impartial reader to determine, after he has passed through this discussion.

It was certainly very uncharitable in the author of "Faith and Baptism" to insinuate, as he does,

that those ministers who differ with him in opinion about baptism, “do not preach *all* the counsel of God.” See 4th page of Introduction, and that there is danger that “the doctrine of Jesus” in their hands will be only “a bleeding victim on the altar of popularity.” See page 96.

If the reader will pardon the candor of the writer of these pages, he will say that, he never felt a stronger temptation to offer a bleeding victim on the altar of popularity than just here.

Thankful for the restraints that the fear of God has put upon him, he will only say that there is nothing in the standards of the Presbyterian church, on this subject, that he does not cordially approve, and which he feels unwilling both to teach and defend on all suitable occasions. Nor is there anything lurking under the name of baptism, as used and taught by our adorable Redeemer, that he does not love and try to teach.

The whole of what we wish to pass in review before the reader, will range itself under the following general divisions :

1st. Circumcision and baptism, sacraments of one and the same covenant—their nature and design.

2nd. The sacrament of baptism—wherein it consists—its meaning and purpose.

3rd. The mode of baptism.

4th. The subjects of baptism.

There never has been but *one* true church of God

on earth. This is so, because there never has been but one true God to pity fallen man, and one true Saviour to redeem him, and one true Spirit to win and draw him back to his recovered life.

The infinite counsels of wisdom and peace between the three Persons of the adorable Trinity date back "before the foundation of the world" and locate themselves in unfathomable eternity.

The principles upon which salvation was to be wrought out, evolved themselves from the depths of the Divine Mind. Being the result of Infinite intelligence, they are all harmonious and never have or can change. The salvation of Abel, Abraham and Paul was wrought out upon precisely the same principles, which all had their home in the bosom of God.

The church is only the outworkings of these saving principles, and must, therefore, be one and only one.

The ages have presented to the eyes of men different developments of this one church, but its essential features have ever been the same.

From Adam to Abraham—from Abraham to Moses—from Moses to Christ, and from Christ down to the present time, it has had one Lord and Head, one Faith and one Spirit.

Having one Lord and standing upon the platform of a common faith in him, as Messiah and Mediator, it has gone forth to the discharge of the duties of its

day, animated and impelled by one and the same Spirit.

Adam, and Abraham, and Moses stood upon the same foundation—Jesus Christ—felt the constraining force of a true faith, and accomplished their salvation through the operation of his Spirit within them.

This church of the Lord Jesus has always been both *visible* and *invisible*. And this is in consequence of the twofold nature of man, as he is composed of body and spirit.

As the spirit of man is invisible, the work God does upon it in the way of its salvation is invisible, save as it is evinced through the activities of his body. And as there is a very intimate connexion in man between his soul and body, both exerting an important mutual influence, God has so constituted his church, that in the great work of salvation it shall touch and rouse the whole man, so that when this shall have been accomplished, the whole man—body and soul—shall stand an eternal monument to Christ's power to save.

The sacraments of the visible church have changed with every dispensation, just as the light of the gospel has increased upon it. But this has been only a change of outward developments, in ceremonies and ordinances, and implies no change in the church itself.

The church from Adam to Abraham, had the



sacrament of *sacrifice*. From Abraham to Moses, it had the sacraments of *Circumcision*. From Moses to Christ, the sacraments of *Circumcision* and *Pass-over*, and from Christ to our day, it has had Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Now, the chief reason for the institution of these Sacraments in the church, will probably be found in the fact that our Saviour, having redeemed the body, as well as the soul of his people, it was fit, that it, in the use of these sacraments, should go through a preparatory process here, and thus aid the soul, in its preparation for the skies, and so soul and body become mutual helpers, in the work of salvation.

As God has appointed the sacraments of the church for the edification of the members thereof, they are never rightly observed, except where the man—body and soul—is employed.

The body must be concerned about the *outward sign*, and the soul with the *thing signified*.

When any sacrament of the church, is thus received, in the mutual activities of the whole man, it is always effectual, in the accomplishment of the thing divinely intended.

The foregoing observations are thought important, to enable the reader to understand the force and practical bearing of what follows.

What then are sacraments?

“Sacraments are holy *signs* and *seals* of the cov-

enant of grace, immediately instituted by God himself, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him, to put a difference between the church and the world, and to engage the church in the service of God according to his word." "Con. Faith," chap. 27, sec. 1.

All sacraments imply the existence of a *covenant* or *promise* on the part of God, for as they are *signs* and *seals*, they are useless unless they sign and seal something.

Now, a sign and sea by themselves are of no value. If put upon a blank sheet of paper, they are worthless; because they convey no right, and seal no obligation. But if they be attached to a paper, in which an estate is conveyed, then they sign and seal the right and title, to what is given in the deed. Just so, if we exclude the covenant of God from the church, they become *ineffectual* and *valueless*; but let the soul understand and embrace the covenant, with its priceless blessings, and they become to it as precious as the blessings themselves.

Thus, in the right use of the sacraments, the *covenant with its promises and blessings*, constitutes the matter about which the soul is engaged, and the performance of the outward rite what occupies the body. These views harmonise with what the great Augustine says when he defines a sacrament to be "a visible sign of a sacred thing" or "a visible form of invisible grace," and also with Calvin when



he says, "There is never any sacrament without an antecedent promise of God, to which it is subjoined as an appendix."

From this elevated position the careful reader is now asked to look at the sacrament of circumcision. The first question that naturally arises here is this: Was there an antecedent covenant which this sacrament signed and sealed? Certainly there was. See Genesis xvii: 4—11.

(The reader is asked to take his Bible and turn to the reference and read it carefully.)

Here the covenant was, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." This was the gist of the whole transaction. All the rest is only subsidiary. At any rate, no one will question this position, that *all that is implied in being a God to Abraham is included in this covenant*. Now, the promise, "a God to thee," includes *every* thing that rational immortals need, whether they be sinless or sinning. The holy angels need no more, and fallen man cannot be more highly blessed.

Is a Saviour necessary to the fallen and the lost? Yes. Was Abraham such? Yes. \* Then to be "*a God to Abraham*," implied that God would provide a Saviour for him. Were pardon, regeneration and sanctification necessary to fit Abraham for heaven? Yes. Then all these are implied in the words, "I will be a God to thee."

Now, what covenant was this? The old covenant

of works? Certainly not; for in all that, God *never did*, because he *never could*, promise the sinner to be his God.

Was it the covenant of circumcision, in which God merely separated the Jewish nation in the posterity of Abraham, and promised to multiply them and give them the land of Canaan? No, not this alone. For though God in the covenant does promise these things, yet they were only *incidental blessings of an earthly nature*, growing out of the *great fact* that God had become his God and the God of his seed.

But that this was the very heart of this covenant appears very plain from the testimony of the Apostle Paul, who says, "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not to seeds as of many, but to thy seed, which is Christ." Gal. iii: 16. Christ, then, included in the covenant was its very life. Including Christ, it by necessity included all the blessings of his death and mediation. It was, therefore, the covenant of grace, because it contained the promise of a Saviour. But what is the testimony of the Apostle on this point? "This I say, that *the covenant*, which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the *inheritance* be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to *Abraham* by promise." Gal. iii: 17, 18.

Now, here the Apostle directly asserts that the

covenant made with Abraham was "*confirmed* in Christ," and that the "inheritance" it secured to him was of "promise," or grace. Now, if it is necessary to render this more plain, if possible, let it be asked, What "inheritance" was this? The reply can only be, the inheritance of *pardon*, *justification* and *eternal life*, of which the Apostle had just been speaking.

Now, then, if the promise of eternal life through him "who was made a curse for us" was contained in the Abrahamic covenant, then that covenant was none other than the covenant of grace, and all the cavillers in the world cannot prove to the contrary.

What was the visible sign-token or sacrament of this covenant with Abraham? God answers, "Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." Gen. xvii: 11.

Circumcision, then, was the visible token or sacrament of this covenant, and this covenant was the covenant of grace. Therefore, circumcision was a sacrament of the covenant of grace, and occupied precisely the same relation to the covenant under the old, that baptism does under the new dispensation.

It is regarded as *all-important* to a correct understanding of this subject, that the reader fully possess himself of the foregoing argument, for just here is

made the very strongest point in the whole Baptist argument.

Our Baptist friends assert that the covenant with Abraham was a kind of national covenant in which temporal blessings were chiefly promised. Circumcision was a token of nationality, and the blessings pertaining to that, a sacrament at most only of the Jewish church, and not of the church of Christ, and therefore furnishes no argument for the baptism of infants.

But if, as we have shown, the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace, and the token of that covenant a "sign of the righteousness of faith," as the Apostle asserts, (see Rom. iv: 11,) then the whole argument breaks down and has no force.

For the benefit of the reader, we will here give the whole of our argument in a condensed form.

The covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii) was the covenant of grace,

1st. In its very nature. For "I will be a God to thee and thy seed," embraces all that is contained in the covenant of grace.

2nd. From the exposition of the Apostle Paul when he says, "not to seeds as of many, but to *thy seed, which is Christ.*"

Is there grace in the gift of a Saviour? Is there grace in his atoning work? Is there grace in his mediatorship on earth and in heaven? Then this

was a covenant full of grace, and grace was its chief and abounding glory.

3rd. From the apostle's explanation of circumcision, the token of this covenant, he does not call it a sign or token of nationality or Judaism, but he says expressly, Abraham "received the *sign* of circumcision as a *seal* of the *righteousness* of faith which he had yet being uncircumcised."

"Righteousness of faith" pertains to the covenant of grace, therefore circumcision was a *sign* and *seal* of the covenant of grace.

There are certain corollaries, that follow from the foregoing argument, of vast practical importance to the church of God.

1st. No sacrament can be of itself absolutely necessary to salvation. For if the sacrament is necessary, then all infants dying in infancy without baptism are lost, but all evangelical Christians unite in the sentiment, that they are saved. Our Saviour says of infants, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven;" and we have reason to believe the penitent thief was taken to Paradise, without the sacraments.

2nd. No sacraments put men in a state of salvation. It was not circumcision that put Abraham in covenant with God: it was only the sign of a previously existing covenant relation. His forerunning interest in the covenant, by the mercy of God, entitled him to the sign thereof. "He received the sign of circumcision, as a seal of the righteousness

of faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised." So in baptism, men in adult years do not obtain an interest in the covenant through their baptism, but they receive the sign of baptism as a seal of the "*righteousness of faith*," which they have before baptism. The "righteousness of faith" going before baptism, is just as necessary to entitle a man to this sign of the covenant, as it was to entitle Abraham to circumcision.

So with our infants, we do not baptize them to introduce them into covenant with God, but because they are already in the covenant by reason of the promise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed."

## CHAPTER II.

BAPTISM—ITS RELATION TO THE COVENANT—NATURE  
AND MEANING.

The commission our Lord and Saviour gave his ministers when he sent them out to “teach,” empowers them to baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity. Matt. xxviii: 19. The charge to baptize being coupled with the command to preach the gospel, shows that it was intended by the Master to go along with that, to all the world. Baptism, then, must go where the gospel goes, and he who has the right to lift up his voice in the utterance of its precious tidings, is equally authorized to place upon all who are won by his instructions, this sign and seal of the covenant of life.

It is not only the *right* but the *duty* of all ministers of the Gospel to baptize. The facts which establish their ministerial character, confirm their right to all the offices pertaining to their ministry.

Baptism is one of the offices of the ministry, therefore it is the *right* and *duty* of every minister to baptize.

What then is baptism? “It is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, *not only* for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also, to be unto him a



*sign and seal* of the covenant of grace, the blessings thereof, and of his giving himself to God, to walk in newness of life. The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Con. of Faith, chap. 28, sec. 1.

This is Christian baptism.

Now let us see, how it agrees with circumcision, and how it differs from it.

1st. It is a sacrament of the visible church. So was circumcision.

2nd. Instituted by God. So was circumcision.

3rd. For admission to the visible church. So of circumcision.

4th. It is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and the blessings thereof. So was circumcision, as we have shown.

5th. It is a sign and seal of our covenant engagement to God, to walk before him in newness of life. So was circumcision.

In five things then they agree. In what do they differ?

1st. Baptism is a sacrament of the New, circumcision of the Old Testament.

2nd. Circumcision was a bloody sacrament, indicating a suffering, bleeding Saviour to come. Baptism is a watery sacrament, indicating a Saviour come, and bloodshedding over.



Now then, they agree in five particulars, and differ in two and these the most *unimportant*. Are they not then, *essentially* the same? and do they not occupy precisely the same relation to the visible church, and the covenant of grace, upon which that church stands?

In confirmation of this view of the case, see what the great Augustin says: "The sacraments of the old Law only promised the Saviour, ours," i. e. those of the New Testament, "give salvation." "The sacraments of the Mosaic Law, announced Christ as *afterwards* to come, *ours* announce Him as already come."

There is then, no difference in the sacraments themselves, only in the outward rite, and the relation they sustain to the Saviour—circumcision prefigures Christ, baptism announces him as come.

Now, whatever the nature of baptism may be, *it cannot lie in the outward application of water, or in the mode of applying the water.*

1st. It does not lie in the outward application of water.

The proof of this point will lie in showing, that circumcision did not consist merely of the outward rite, and if circumcision did not, much more baptism does not, by unavoidable consequence.

Under the Old Testament, admission to the Church, and all the blessings of the covenant, were held forth to believers, under signs and figures. This was emphatically a dispensation of ceremonies; yet, even

under this, every sign held forth a spiritual mystery, upon which the faith of believers rested.

Thus, while the rite of circumcision was enjoined, as the ceremony of initiation to the fellowship of the church, the Jews were at the same time instructed in the nature of the sign, in the command to "circumcise the foreskin of their heart." Deut. x: 16. The outward sign then—the cutting of the flesh, imported the cutting of the heart, and the consecration of *that* to the service of God. To conscientious and true believers, who received the outward rite in testimony of their faith, God promises this, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy *heart*, and the heart of thy seed." For what purpose? "To love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, that thou mayest live." Deut. xxx: 6. Then, the outward circumcision in the flesh, was a sign that signified the circumcision of the heart, and it was this spiritual circumcision which introduced a man to the covenant of grace and all its blessings. For its effect was, "that thou mayest love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

Thus, it is evident, in getting down to the true nature of circumcision, we penetrate through the mists and shadows of the ceremonial Law, and find ourselves standing upon precisely the same foundation of the disciples of our Lord. Well then does the apostle Paul say of all Christians, they "stand upon the foundation of the apostles," and is this all? If so, we have made no progress in our argument,

No. This is not all—"are built upon the foundation of the apostles, and prophets, *Jesus Christ* being the chief corner stone." Eph. ii: 20.

Did the prophets—the old Jewish prophets, who received the sign of circumcision, stand upon the foundation which has *Jesus Christ* for its corner stone? Then we all stand together there. They got upon it through the grace of God, and entered into visible fellowship with the saints through the outward rite of circumcision. We get upon it, through the same grace, and enter into visible fellowship with those standing there, through baptism. What then is the difference? The grace is the same, the effect of that grace the same, the fellowship the same, the foundation the same, and the blessings the same. Well, what is the difference? There is none, but the mode of introduction into the visible church. The ancient people came by circumcision, we by baptism. The *nature* of the initiatory rites must therefore be the same.

This being the case, what does the apostle Paul testify? Why this, "He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God."

Now then, if circumcision under the old dispensation of forms and ceremonies, did not consist

merely of the outward sign, but had a spiritual meaning under the sign, which must be reached, in order to understand its nature and meaning, much more baptism, under the simpler form of the church in these gospel times.

The application of water to the person baptized, whether by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, gives us no clue, of itself, to understand the nature of the rite.

Every body sees that the *act* is nothing, and yet, while this is so, all the circumstances of the outward act, are necessary to baptism. Each of the five following things are *necessary* to the outward rite.—1. Water. 2. Using water, either by sprinkling, pouring or immersion. 3. By a minister. 4. The words of institution, or in the name of the Holy Trinity. 5. The minister acting in his official character.

If a single one of these particulars fail, we cannot have the outward sign of baptism. But with all of them combined, we find no intelligent meaning, if we stop with the outward ordinance. What does all this mean, is the natural inquiry that constantly arises in the mind? If it be said, the water of baptism cleanses the body, the objector may immediately reply, I can wash better at home. If it be said, the outward rite cleanses the soul, he may reply, it is both contrary to reason, and the nature of things, that water applied to the body, should cleanse the

soul. But, if it be said, this is a sacrament instituted by God himself, every body who believes the statement, is prepared to find a sufficient reason in it, for God is always wise.

What then does baptism as a sacrament mean?

In answer to this question, let the following thoughts be duly considered :

Every sacrament implies a pre-existent covenant, to which it is affixed, and every covenant supposes parties covenanting.

Baptism then, being a sacrament to a covenant, necessarily requires a *subject covenanting*.

Without a subject to be baptised, there can be no baptism, and this subject must be both *capable* of covenanting, and *absolutely covenanting*. We cannot baptise a brute, because it is incapable of covenanting. We cannot baptise a man, according to the intention of the great Head of the Church, who is *unwilling* to covenant with God, because, in the very nature of covenants, it is necessary that the parties be free, and willing.

Is then, baptism a sacrament to a covenant? Certainly it is. For when the penitents of Pentecost inquired, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Peter replies, "*Be baptised* every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ."

Now, observe, upon what he bases his instruction to them to be baptised. "For" says he, "the promise," i. e. covenant, "is unto you, and to

your children, and to all afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts ii, 38, 39. Here then, is baptism, distinctly represented as a sacrament to a covenant,—and man is the subject of the rite, because he is a rational, free agent, capable of understanding.

Having now the sacrament, and the covenant, and the *subject*—man, are we ready to baptise? No. Why? Because the *subject* must not only be capable, *but fit*. "*Repent, and be baptised,*" said Peter, to the converts of Pentecost. "*If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest,*" said Philip to the Eunuch.

Man, as the subject of baptism, needs to have *two* important changes pass upon him, before he can be *fit* for that solemn rite. 1. He needs that his mind be enlightened, in a knowledge of the covenant.—2. He needs that his heart be made willing to embrace the terms of the covenant. To effect these, God has given the Bible, the Church, the Ministry, the preached Gospel, and the Holy Spirit.

Through these great agencies, God designs to hold forth his covenant of life to the intelligence of man, that through that intelligence, He may win his heart to its terms, and thus he be made *fit* to covenant with God. When through the teaching of the Word, and experience of the Spirit, a man knows the covenant, and does actually covenant, then, and not till then,



is he prepared for baptism, which is a sacrament of the covenant.

A person thus enlightened, has learned to love, desire, and long after, the blessings of the covenant. Thus feeling, he seeks a public recognition, and in baptism, takes his place in the visible Church of Christ, professing his faith in Him, and vowing to walk with Him "in newness of life."

This now gives a meaning to baptism. In this light, we do not now look upon it as a superstition, or a mysterious mummary, but an intelligent act, having a meaning—both performed and received for good and sufficient reasons.

Nor is this all. For we have not half fathomed the depth of the meaning of this glorious institution, if we stop with making baptism merely an initiatory rite, by which we profess Christ, and covenant to obey his commands. *It is much more than this.* We do not get down to the heart of the matter—the moving, stirring life of the institution, if we stop here. For baptism, as a sacrament to a covenant, is God's *sign* and *seal*, confirming to the *fit* subject thereof, all the benefits contained therein.

While on the one hand, baptism obliges the receiver, to walk "in newness of life," it at the same time, imposes upon God, the covenant obligation, to make good to such, all covenant blessings. Such as a justified state—a sanctified heart—the "forgive-

ness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting.”

The thing, then, signified in the baptism of every believer, is just this—The reception of such person into the covenant of grace, as it is administered under the New Testament. Not, by any means that this of itself puts such in covenant with God, but only signifies and shows forth publicly the fact of a previous covenant relation.

Now, as circumcision was the *sign* and *seal* of the covenant, under the Old Testament, (see Gen. xvii: 11; Rom. iv: 11,) so baptism which comes in its place, (see Col. ii: 11,) is the sign of God’s covenant, and (as the great Basil says) “the inviolable *seal* thereof.”

Reception into the covenant of grace, always imports these two things, and it matters not whether that reception dates back to the days of the prophets, or locates itself in the present time.

1. Communion with Christ and his Church, and an actual participation in all the benefits of such a state.

2. An engagement to obedience to all Christ’s commands.

Now, that both of these are sealed in baptism, there can be no question. As to the former, the apostle Paul expressly says “we are baptised into one body,” (1 Cor. xii: 13.) And as Christ is the Head



of that body, baptism must put us into communion with Christ and his church. And that all the *benefits* of such a relation are *sealed* unto us, will appear from the fact that, the apostle Peter regarded them as so sealed, and sure, that he uses the emphatic language, "we are saved by baptism." 1st Pet. iii : 21. Now, whatever may be the critical interpretation of this text, there can be no question that the apostle regarded baptism as *sealing* salvation to all true believers.

As to the latter, baptism seals our obligation to *obedience*, because the apostle Peter describes it as "the answer of a good conscience towards God." 1st Pet. iii : 21. Baptism, therefore, forever stands, as the "inviolable seal" of communion with Christ. I say it seals Christ, dear reader, and all the blessings that are in Him. The application of the water in this ordinance is God's *speaking sign*, put upon the person of the believer, signifying to him, and the church that God—the God of the covenant, is his God. And it is God's seal, in its spiritual import, by which all the blessings mentioned in the covenant are confirmed unto it.

## CHAPTER III.

## BAPTISM—ITS MODE.

Christian baptism was not given to the church as a *permanent institution*, until the Saviour about to leave the world, sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel. Matt. xxviii : 19.

John's baptism was given of God, but it was the baptism of repentance, heralding a present Saviour, and crying in the wilderness, "behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." It was temporary, and designed to prepare the way for Christ's permanent institution. Nazianzinus calls John "the middle person between the Old and New Testament."

Tertullian says of him, "he was the boundary set between the Old and New, at which Judaism should terminate, and from which Christianity should begin."

John's baptism was something intermediate, intended as it were, to break the severity of the old rites, and prepare the minds of the people for the simpler forms of a pure Christianity.

Whether it was the christian baptism or not, is of little consequence to determine, though there can be no doubt it allied itself more immediately with

Christianity, as John was Christ's immediate forerunner.

John's Baptism, and that of Christ's Disciples, before the gospel commission was given, were designed to prepare the way for that change about to be effected, in the visible church, when her sacraments—the *signs* and seals of her covenant, should be so altered, as to represent a Saviour come, atonement finished, and salvation won.

Now, in instituting the sacrament of baptism, it is only reasonable to expect that a wise Saviour, knowing its great importance to his church and people, would leave nothing *essential* to the rite, in a state of obscurity. But this most manifestly he has done, if the *mode* of applying the water in baptism is essential to the validity of the ordinance. For in no text of the Bible, is it said, that baptism shall be performed by immersion, sprinkling, pouring, or in any other mode. Nay, further, it is asserted, and contradiction is challenged here, *in no case of baptism recorded in the Bible is it said, whether the subject baptized, was baptized by immersion or in any other mode.*

Then, we think, we may safely commence this discussion by saying, that our Saviour did not regard the *mode of baptism*, as essential to the rite.

There are several *modes* of baptism, practised among men; such as sprinkling or pouring, immer-

sion, the sign of the cross, and the use of oil, salt, and spittle.

All evangelical churches use sprinkling or pouring, except the Baptist. This uses immersion. The Puseyite the sign of the cross. The Roman Catholic the oil, salt, and spittle.

We have no difficulty in distinctly stating it as our opinion that all these have the Christian baptism, except the Roman Catholic.\* As Presbyterians we stand pledged by our book, to recognise all the rest, as churches of our Lord Jesus, and their members as brethren.

In discussing then, this immaterial point—the *mode* of baptism, we do not wish, or intend, to unchurch any who differ with us, nor do we desire to write one word which will disturb the harmony which it has been our good fortune to enjoy with brethren of other churches. All that the writer of these pages intends, is to assert for himself, as a teacher of gospel truth, the fullest liberty of investigation, and when he thinks he has arrived at the meaning of the divine word, to communicate that meaning to his own people, (and all others who shall honor him with their attention) so that they, and the standards of our church shall be vindicated from any charges of unsoundness that may be brought against them.

---

\* The General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, at their sessions, in May 1845, decided the question, "Is baptism in the church of Rome valid?" in the negative, by a vote of 173 to 8.

The only argument we shall have here, will be with our Baptist brethren, and this by a kind of necessity laid upon us. For, we must show our reasons for the views we Presbyterians hold, or by silence seem ashamed of them, or afraid to assert them.

Just here, we wish to pause, while we ask permission of the reader to say a few things, in order that we may place ourself right with him.

We distinctly assert that we have no *controversy* with the Baptist Church, in the odious sense of that word. We believe it to be an honored church of Christ. We would not injure it in the slightest degree, if we could; we would not proselyte one of its members. We would not take from it, its dearly beloved Immersion. We have no sympathy with those bitter controversialists who can see no good in it, and denounce it as an evil. On the other hand, we regard it as one branch of the family of Jesus, and in many respects, we honor it.

Yes, we honor the Baptist church, and bid her God speed in the work of the Master. We honor her because she holds a pure gospel—because, with this gospel in her hand, and regulating the pulsations of her great heart, with Robert Hall at her head in the early part of the present century she did much to drive back from the shores of England, the invading forces of French Infidelity—because she was foremost in reviving the Protestant church to a sense of its obligations to the perishing heathen, or-

ganised the first Foreign Missionary Society of modern times in England ; and in the person of William Carey, translated the Word of God in India, so as to make it accessible to three hundred millions of the human family, or one third of our race. All honor then, to that church, which is thus highly honored of God—the pages of whose history are illustrated with such names as Carey and Fuller, and Ryland, and Hall and Judson, and Spurgeon.

But we do not love, and we have no patience with that spirit of bigotry and highchurchism, found among many of our Baptist brethren, which seeks to unchurch portions of the family of God, as good as they, and cut the ties of christian union among Christ's people, and that too, upon a point of comparatively trifling importance ; and that we are not singular in the opinion that these sentiments are *intolerant, anti-christian* and *unwise*, will appear from the testimony of many of the wisest and best men the Baptist church has ever produced.

As a specimen of this testimony, we introduce Robert Hall and C. H. Spurgeon ; the first, ranking with the most learned, eloquent, and pious men of his day—the latter, we believe to be the foremost preacher of the age. Hall says “the policy of intolerance is exactly proportioned to the capacity of inspiring fear. The Church of Rome for many ages, practised it, with infinite advantage, because she possessed ample means for intimidation. But what was policy



in her would be the height of infatuation in us, who are neither entitled by our situation, nor by our crimes, to aspire to this guilty pre-eminence. I am fully persuaded that few of our brethren have duly reflected on the strong resemblance which subsists between the pretensions of the church of Rome and the principles implied in strict communion; *both equally intolerant*; the one armed with pains and penalties; the other, I trust, disdaining such aid; the one, the intolerance of power, the other of weakness.”—

*Works, vol. 1 p. 358.* Again, in accounting for the fact that the Baptist church has not come up to her duty in the measure of its success, he says, “But though we have not “drunk with the drunken,” if we have unwittingly “beaten our fellow servants” by assuming a dominion over their conscience; if we have severed ourselves from the members of Christ and under pretence of preserving the purity of christian ordinances, violated the christian spirit; if we have betrayed a lamentable want of that “love, which is the fulfilling of the law,” by denying a place in our churches to those who belong to the “church of the first born,” and straitening their avenue till it has become narrower than the way to heaven, we may easily account for all that has followed, and have more occasion to be surprised at the compassionate Redeemer’s bearing with our infirmities, than at his not bestowing a signal blessing upon our labors.”—

*Works, vol. 1, p. 399.*

In giving his views of the intolerance of the church of England, Spurgeon says, "I think this bears rather hard on our friends—the strict communion Baptists. I should not like to say any thing hard against them, for they are about the best people in the world; but they really do separate themselves from the great body of Christ's people. The Spirit of the living God will not let them do this really—but they do it professedly. I do not believe it is wilful *schism* that makes them thus act; but at the same time, I think the old man within has some hand in it."

As to the matter of schism, to which Spurgeon alludes, let the following illustration be considered:

Two ministers, strangers to each other, and educated under widely different circumstances, are passengers together on a vessel at sea, which is wrecked on an unknown continent, and all lost but themselves. Their desolate condition draws them very closely together, and they soon know and love each other. With hearts burning with love to the Saviour, and the perishing around them, they preach together the gospel of salvation; many are converted, and the time comes when these heathen are to be received by baptism into the visible church. It is agreed that half shall be baptised by one of these ministers, and the rest by the other.

The first takes his subjects into the middle of the stream and immerses them; the other stands upon



its bank, and sprinkles them. After the ceremony, minister A enquires of minister B why he does not baptise the people. B replies, I have done so. No, says A, you have only sprinkled them, and that is not baptism. Neither you nor yours have the christian institution, you cannot come with us to the Lord's table, and enjoy there the communion of saints. But replies B, let us not fall out about this, it is only a matter of opinion between us—our Saviour left no express direction, I acknowledge your immersion as valid; if you prefer it, practice it. I hope you will extend the same courtesy to me, and let us live and labor together as brethren. No, replies A, we cannot live or labor together, we cannot commune together, because your views are unsound on the mode of baptism.

Which of these would be guilty of *schism* in the body of Christ? Let the impartial reader answer. Let no professed disciple of Christ think the sin of schism to be a small one. It is pestilent, ruinous: and let it be observed that this sin does not consist alone in external division. The worst schism is that which destroys the grace of charity among God's people. "Whatsoever violates this, is the most destructive, moral schism, as much worse than an unwilling breach of outward order, as the malicious tearing in pieces a man's living body, is worse than accidental tearing of his clothes. I know not how to judge of Christianity, than by charity. Nor know I, when

among them that profess there is less of either, than with them that would confine and engross both to their several parties; that say here is Christ and there he is; and will have the notions of christian, of saint, of church, to extend no farther than their own arbitrarily assigned limits, or than as they are pleased to describe their circle. Nor doth it savor more of uncharitableness in any, to think of enclosing the truth and purity of religion, only within their own precincts, than it doth of pride and vanity, to fancy they can exclude thence every thing of offensive impurity.”—*Howe's Works*, vol. 1, p, 483.

Now, we design in this discussion to occupy B's place. We will not attack A's mode of baptism by immersion, as not christian, and therefore, not valid. We acknowledge its validity. What we shall assert and prove, will be this, that *our mode of baptism by sprinkling is as good as his, and is better backed, both by the letter, and spirit of Scripture*, and then, if he insists upon it, that both cannot stand together, we shall require him, in the name of our common Master, and by the love he bears his cause, to unite with us, in executing the great commission, “go teach and baptise” in our mode of sprinkling.

The subject will be considered in the following manner.

1. We shall show that the Saviour has left no *express* direction as to the mode of applying the water in baptism.

2. His intention in this.

3. The sources of information on this subject; what they are, and what they teach.

1. The commission our Saviour gave his disciples, contains no specific directions as to the mode of baptising. The direction is "go, and baptise"; and as water is the element, the whole of it is just this, "go baptise with water."

Not only so, but in no single instance of baptism by the apostles, under the eye of the Master, or after his ascension to glory, is there a single act recorded, or circumstance related, that proves *directly* any particular mode of applying the water in baptism. To prove this, the fact need only be stated, which it is supposed will not be disputed, that although the mode of baptism has been canvassed in the church for centuries, by the ablest minds and ripest scholars, not one of them, has ever been able to bring forward any *direct, positive proof* in favor of any particular mode. Now, what does this prove, but that the Saviour did not mean to confine the administration of the ordinance to any particular mode, lest weak man should make baptism to consist in the mode, and thus exalt the outward sign, to the importance and dignity of the thing signified?

2. Several explanations may be given of the fact, that our Saviour did not give express directions on this subject, each of them going to show us his intention in this matter.

1st. Water baptism represents to us a great spiritual mystery, i. e. *soul purification*, effected through the blood and Spirit of Christ. The *force* of the figure lies in the application of pure water to the person of the subject, not in the amount of water used, or in the manner of using it. For as water cleanses the defilements of the body, so the blood of Christ those of the soul. And as the efficacy of Christ's blood to cleanse the soul, depends not upon the amount shed, but upon its intrinsic value, so the efficacy of the water representing it, depends not upon its quantity, but upon its pureness.

Accordingly it is well said by Dominicus A. Soto, as quoted by Witsius, "In baptism there is something *essential*, as the washing with water, and something *accidental* as the washing *in this* or *that manner*." Our blessed Saviour then, no doubt intended by leaving his disciples without *express* instruction as to the mode, to teach them that baptism consisted in the washing, not in the mode of doing it.

He intended, therefore, to call off their minds from the "accidental" and fix them upon the *essential*, so that scope might thus be given to the outgoing of their mutual charity, and there be no schism in the body of Christ.

2nd. The reason why he laid no great stress upon the mode of applying the water in baptism, will appear from the fact that he intended that the ordi-

nance should go, where his ministers and the gospel went, to the ends of the earth.

But if our wise Redeemer had so tied baptism to immersion, that there could not be one, without the other, then he would have placed a very great, if not insuperable difficulty in the way of the progress of his cause, in many portions of the earth. Among the mountains of Lapland, and in the frozen seas of the Poles, immersion cannot go, as a permanent institution. Into the sandy deserts of Asia and Africa it cannot penetrate and remain, for there is no water for immersion.

Now, by the sure word of prophecy and promise, "all nations" must be baptized—must feel the purifying touch of the water of life. By the decree of the great God, and by the sure and irresistible march of gospel truth, "Greenland's icy mountains, and India's coral strands," and Africa's sandy deserts, are all obliged to feel the tread of the victorious soldiers of the cross. Their benighted populations are obliged to hear the story of the crucified One, from the lips of the dauntless missionary, and they will, under the Truth that wins and conquers every where, seek admission to the fellowship of the saints, in the visible church. But if in Greenland they are compelled to wait till the streams are thawed, or in India and Africa until streams are opened in the desert, they will wait a long time.

But on the other hand, if sprinkling is allowable, if baptism may be performed in this way, then the missionary no sooner finds fit subjects for the rite, than with the aid of fire, from the jagged ice, he has his water at hand, or if he has no fire, then a handful of snow, held for a moment in his hand, furnishes him his element for baptism. Or if pursuing a tent life with the wandering Arab or African, where no streams are found, no sooner does he find a fit subject for baptism, than in the canteens or skins of the wanderers, he finds water enough to administer the rite. These facts, it is thought, show most conclusively, that it was never the intention of the Saviour to make immersion necessary to baptism.

But after all, this is purely a Scripture question, and can never be adjusted, except by a direct appeal to the Word of God. What then say the Scriptures? This brings us directly to our third division—the sources of information on this subject, and what they teach.

Here, our appeal is directly to the Scripture. But as we have shown that the Scriptures contain no *direct* and *positive* proof in favor of any particular mode, we will have to content ourselves with *circumstantial* or *inferential* proof. And this kind of proof is sometimes as satisfactory, and often as far as man is concerned, more reliable than any other.—



For, as the law says, "circumstances never lie, witnesses may."

This proof will arrange itself under the three following heads:

1. Words used in speaking of the institution.
2. Circumstances in which the ordinance was administered by inspired men.
3. Figures used by the Holy Ghost in speaking of baptism.

In each of these, the careful reader will find the mass of truth to be in favor of sprinkling, as the Scripture mode of baptism.

1. The words used in Scripture in speaking of this ordinance.

The word upon which the chief *stress* is laid in this discussion, is the Greek word "*Baptizo*." The prepositions "Ek," "Eis," "Apo," and "En," also hold an important place. We have asserted, and we think proved that our Saviour did not *expressly* teach any particular mode of baptism.

This proposition will now require us to show

1. That "*Baptizo*," when used in the Bible, in connection with the institution of Christ, refers to the institution, and not to the mode of applying the water.

2. When it is used in the Scriptures, it very often bears along with it a very different idea from that of immersion.

It is thought important that the reader notice dis-

tinely our position here. We do not assert that "*baptizo*" never means immersion; on the contrary, we think it often means this. Nay, that its primary meaning is to immerse. But what we say, is this, that it *often means something else*, and very different from immerse; and according to the mind of the Spirit, conveyed to us in the language of the New Testament, *it simply means to wash, to cleanse*.—Pictet says, "the Hebrew word which the Septuagint renders *baptizein*, (2 Kings v: 14) is taken for a Hebrew word which means to *wash*; hence, the word *baptizein*, is simply used for *to wash*.—*Theology*, p. 412.

As applied to the rite of baptism, it means the *fact of cleansing*, and *not the mode* by which it is done.

This, we think, is the ground taken by our Confession, on this subject. That is a slander upon our church which represents it as holding that all modes but its own are unscriptural, and therefore, to be denounced. The great men who formed our Book were too wise of head, and large of heart, to think of sundering the ties of christian fellowship upon the minor point of the mode of baptism; their language accordingly is, "dipping the person in water *is not necessary*; but baptism is *rightly* administered by *pouring* or *sprinkling* water upon the person."—*Con. Faith*, chap. 28, sec. 3. This was the view taken of this subject by Luther, Calvin, and Witsius. Neither of these great men ever taught (as some de-



sire to make them) that "*baptizo*" meant *only* immersion, and *always* immersion. Luther's works are not before us, but Dr. Fuller quotes him as saying "Baptism is a Greek word, and may mean immersion." But he does *not* say it *always*, but only *may* mean immersion.

Calvin says, Institutes, chap. 15, Sec 19, "*Baptizo*" signifies to immerse, and the rite of immersion was practiced by the ancient church." But does Calvin say that *baptizo always* means immersion? Does he say that the ancient church *always* practiced immersion, and regarded every other mode of baptism invalid? No, he says no such thing. What then, is his testimony on this point? As he is a witness put on the stand by our Baptist brethren, let us have his whole testimony. Listen to him. "But whether the person who is baptised, be wholly immersed, or whether thrice, or once, or whether water be only poured or sprinkled upon him, *is of no importance*. Churches are at liberty, in this respect, to act according to the difference of countries."

What says Witsius, the most learned divine since Calvin? "Though *baptizein* properly signifies to plunge, or dip, yet it is also *more generally used for any washing*."—*Witsius' Econ. of Cov. B. iv., ch. 16, sec. 14.*

All that is meant to be shown here, is, that the Presbyterian Church, through her Confession, and the great and good men whose words we have quo-

ted, regarded the *religious meaning* of *baptizo*, as it is connected with the institution of Christ, as any *washing with water* in the name of the Holy Trinity. The attention of the candid reader is also called to the following remarks taken from one of the most learned works issued from the press of this country, Com. on the Acts, by Dr. J. A. Alexander, vol. 1, p. 84: "Even granting that this Greek verb originally meant to immerse, i. e. to dip or plunge—a fact which is still earnestly disputed,—it does not follow that this is essential to its meaning, as a peculiar christian term. On the contrary, analogy would lead us to suppose, that like other Greek terms, thus adopted, it had undergone some modification of its etymological and primary import. As Presbyter no longer suggests personal age, nor Deacon, menial service, nor Supper a nocturnal meal, as necessary parts of their secondary christian meaning, why should this *one word* be an exception to the general rule, and signify a *mere mode* of action, as not less essential than the act itself? Even if it could be shown that immersion was the universal practice, both of Jews and Christians, it would prove no more than the universal practice of reclining at meals, and mixing wine with water."

Dr. Fuller says: "In commanding his disciples to be baptised, Jesus knew what act he enjoined, and he could be at no loss for a word clearly to express his meaning." Certainly this is so. "If Jesus

meant immerse, and nothing else, the word was *baptizo*." Certainly *if he meant immerse*, but that is the very point in debate. Did he mean immerse? We would like to ask the Doctor if Jesus meant *neither* of the modes specified, *or all*, what word would he then have used? Why, the very word he has used, *baptizo*, for that in the Scripture usage *means either*, and covers all the rest.

This we now proceed to prove, and we ask the candid reader to take his Bible, and turn to the passages, as we progress in this discussion. In Heb. ix: 10, we read about the Jewish "service," which the apostle says "stood only in meats and drinks, and divers *washings*." "*Baptismois*," divers baptisms. Does the word here mean *only* immersion? Before this can be made to appear, it must be shown that in the Jewish service there were no washings, but by immersion, which can never be done.

Mark vii: 4, we read, "And when they come from the market, except they wash," "*baptisontai*,"—baptise, "they eat not." And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing," (*baptismous*, baptisms,) of cups and pots, and brazen vessels and tables."

Now, these are some of the items of the Jewish service, to which the apostle alludes above. Does not the word here mean *to wash*?

Luke xi: 38, "And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled, that he had not first washed," (*ebaptisthe*,

baptized) before dinner." We submit these passages to any impartial man, to say, whether they mean immersion.

"The Pharisees, when they come from market, except they *baptize*, eat not." Hence the Pharisee marveled at our Lord, because he *baptized* not before dinner. Now, if "*baptizo*" here means, to *wash*, the meaning is very plain. But if as our Baptist friends say, it means immersion, then the meaning is very obscure, if it has any at all. With this rendering of the word, their new version of the Bible, will read thus, "The Pharisees when they come from market, except they immerse themselves, eat not," "and when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first immersed himself," and then their translation will state a very questionable thing, for there is no evidence that the Pharisees immersed themselves before meals, and then it would not be true, that this Pharisee marveled at our Lord, because he had not first immersed himself.

But if it be said that the above texts refer to the tradition of the elders mentioned by Matt. xv: 2, and alludes to the washing of the hands, and when we wash our hands, we dip them in water, I reply, that we may wash the hands either by dipping, or pouring water upon them, and the *fact of washing* determines nothing, as to *the mode* in which this is

done\*. Besides, even if we allow that *washing* cannot possibly be done except by dipping, still, if we *dip* in order to baptize (wash) then it is very certain that there is a difference between *dipping* and *baptizing*, for baptizing (washing) is the *end*, dipping *the means* to that end. It is however a matter of very little consequence *how* they baptized (washed) their hands, for the word "*baptizo*" here clearly expresses the *thing done* i. e. *the washing*, and not the manner of doing it.

Again, John in speaking of his baptism, and that of the Saviour, uses, with respect to both, the same word, "*baptizo*;" if therefore, it refers to the *mode*, and means immersion in the case of John, so also in that of our Saviour, Luke iii: 16, "I indeed baptize (*baptizo*) you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, he shall baptize (*baptizo*) you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Now, dear reader, let us read this text according

---

\* There is a passage in 2nd Kings, iii: 11, which doubtless has appeared strange to many, and which we think throws light on this subject. The passage refers to a part of the office of Elisha as servant to Elijah. King Jehoshaphat asks, "Is there not here a prophet of the Jews?" and is answered "*Here is Elisha, who poured water on the hands of Elijah*," i. e. who was his servant. Here the washing was by pouring. In reference to this washing of hands, "Pitts. Acco. Mo. Rd." Page 24 has this, "Before they rise from meat, a servant steps into the middle of the company with a basin of water, like a coffee pot, and lets the water run upon their hands, one after another as they sit."

to the theory of our Baptist friends, and see what we shall make of it. Remember Dr. Fuller says, "*baptizo*" just means immersion, and nothing else, and refers to the *mode*. "I indeed immerse you with water; but he shall immerse you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Paraphrased according to this rendering, it would read thus, I indeed according to my *mode* of baptism, immerse you with water, Christ according to his mode of baptism shall immerse you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

Now it is very evident, this is a most forced, unnatural, and untrue construction. There are three reasons that must destroy it.

1st. We have no account in all the Scripture of any being immersed in the Holy Ghost.

2nd. We have no information from Scripture of any man, dipped, plunged, immersed in fire, by our Saviour, but the finally damned.

3rd. The very construction destroys itself, for it gives up the point in debate. What is the point? Why, whether *baptizo* refers to the *mode* or *institution* of baptism. To show that *baptizo* refers to the mode, our Baptist friends make John say, I *immerse* you with water, Christ shall *immerse* you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Now let it be asked, why does John immerse with water? The answer is, *to baptize*: why does Christ immerse with the Holy Ghost? The answer is, *to baptize*.



Then there is a difference according to their own showing between immersion and baptism. They are two things, *distinct* and *different*; immersion is not baptism, and baptism is not immersion. Now see how much more simple and natural our construction of this passage is: "I indeed baptize (wash, cleanse) you with water, but there cometh one after me, he shall baptize (wash, cleanse) you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." This reading abstracts our minds from the "accidental" mode, and fixes them upon the "essential" baptismal cleansing.

But there is another view of this case, which not only strengthens, but confirms our view of Baptism. How was the baptism of Jesus Christ, to which John refers, described before John's day?—What language was used by the Prophets respecting it? and how was this baptism to be performed? Let us see, God speaking by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah says, "For I will *pour water* upon him that is thirsty. I will *pour my Spirit* upon thy seed." Isa. xlv: 3.

This is a promise to God's people, in gospel times. "I will *pour water*, I will *pour my Spirit*." Here is a direct allusion to baptism, and it refers *immediately* to what John says Christ will do. Is there then here the least hint at immersion? Certainly not. But let it be distinctly noticed, that this prophetic promise embraces in its ample scope not only "him that is thirsty," but also "thy seed." Here then is

gospel baptism by *pouring*, reaching expressly to *the children* of believers.

Again, Isa. lii: 15, "He," i. e. Christ, "shall *sprinkle many nations*." This is another prophecy running directly in the line of John's promise. Is there any allusion to immersion here? No. More than 600 years before his coming, Isaiah cries, in the language of inspired prophecy "He shall *sprinkle many nations*," and John, Christ's immediate forerunner, takes up the prophecy, and applies it to Christ, in the language "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." The two together amount to a demonstration in favor of sprinkling.

Again God says by the mouth of Ezekiel, "I will *sprinkle* clear water upon you, and I will *cleans* you." The *sprinkling* and *cleansing* are the same. All, I believe admit, that this promise refers to gospel times. John applies it, "He," i. e. Christ "shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Here again by *inspired men*, sprinkling and baptizing are connected, but there is nothing said about immersion.

Passing the burying ground of the old prophets and the sepulchre of glorious old John, we come and take our stand among the generations when the Prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel locate themselves, and enquire, are there any voices that come to us in the same strain? Yes, listen! From the throbbing heart of the church, this song bursts, "We are come



to *Jesus the Mediator* of the New Covenant.”—

This, then, was Isaiah’s and Ezekiel’s glorious *Sprinkler* and John’s *mighty Baptizer*. But in coming to the Sprinkler, Baptizer, and Mediator, was that all the Church had to sing of? No: “And to the *blood of sprinkling*, which speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Heb. xii : 24. The climax of the song is, that they had come through the Mediator, to *baptismal—sprinkled blood*, or sprinkled, washing, cleansing blood.

And if we wish to know who these are that sing, the apostle will answer, “Elect, unto obedience and *sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus Christ.” 1st Pet. i : 2.

Now, that we are not mistaken in applying these prophecies of the Old Testament to that baptism which John asserted for Jesus Christ, will appear, if we inquire how, in what manner, or mode, the baptism of the Holy Ghost was performed.

What saith the Scripture? “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is *come upon you*.” Acts i : 8. No immersion here. “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath *shed forth* this which ye see and hear.” Acts ii : 33. “As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost *fell on them*, as on us at the beginning.” Acts xi : 15. “And they of the circumcision which believed were

astonished, because that on the Gentiles *was poured out* the gift of the Holy Ghost."

We learn from these passages of Scripture, that the baptism of which John speaks as performed by Jesus Christ, "comes upon," "falls upon," is "poured out," but in all this there is not the *slightest allusion* to immersion.

We ask then, in view of these Scriptures, what does God witness as to baptism? We answer, most clearly that it means *to wash, to cleanse*. What does he witness as to the mode in which the purifying power comes to the soul? We answer, his witness is, that it "*comes upon,*" "*falls upon,*" "*is poured out.*" Why then, as water baptism is only an emblem of this, we have the testimony of God in favor of sprinkling, and this far exceeds the testimony of all the lexicographers in the world in favor of immersion.

What then is the conclusion of the whole matter? Just this: That "*baptizo*" used in a Scripture sense to express this ordinance, means *washing only*, and has no reference to any particular mode. It neither means immersion, sprinkling, nor pouring, for these are only different ways of washing. But the baptism of the Spirit is expressly *called sprinkling*. As to the Greek prepositions, on which so much stress is laid in this discussion, we have this to remark; nothing can be made of them, to determine one way or the other, in favor of any mode of baptism, for

they all have so many meanings, that no wise scholar will attempt to confine them to any particular signification in all cases. Their meaning varies according to the relation they bear to the sense when they occur.

Take for instance the prepositions "*Eis*" and "*en*," and let us see what bearing they have upon the *mode* of baptism. The baptism of the eunuch by Philip is a case in point, Acts viii: 38. "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch and he baptized him."

Now our opponents find here one of their strongest passages. They ask, does not the Bible say "went down into the water," and if they went "into the water," what did they go for but that the Eunuch might be immersed?

Here our opponents say is *immersion*, and it is not worth while to deny it, and it is only a cavil to do so.

But let us look at the words in the original language, and see if we who sprinkle have not occasion to complain of the translators. They went down "*eis to hudor*" "into the water." But "*eis*" means *to*, *unto*, as well as *into*.

This we prove from the following three texts: 1st. Matt. vi: 26, "Behold the fowls of the air" &c. The original is "*emblepsate eis*." "Look *unto* the fowls of the air." Here it means *unto* and not *into*. 2nd. Matt. xxi: 1, "and when they drew nigh *unto* ("*eis*")

Jerusalem, and were come to ("*eis*") Bethpage. Here it is *to*, and not *into*. 3rd. John xx : 3, 4, "So they ran both together, and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first "*eis*" *to* the sepulchre." Here it is *to*, and not *into*. Here then in all these texts, and many others that might be cited, the translators give "*eis*" the meaning of *to*, and *unto*, and yet, as if to accommodate our Baptist friends, in the transaction of Philip and the Eunuch they translated it *into*. Surely we have reason to complain, but we will not, for we know that it bears various meanings. Only read the text with "*eis*" translated *to* or *unto*, and all the immersion gloss is taken off.

All we intend however to show is, that nothing can be proved as to the mode of baptism from the rendering of any of the Greek prepositions.

Before dismissing this part of the subject, we must notice a Baptist comment on "*en*." An author of that church cites eleven texts of Scripture, "in all of which except two, and thousands of others in the New Testament, the Greek word "*en*" is rendered *in* by the translators of the English version. In two instances "*en*" is rendered *with*, that is *with water*, instead of *in water*, and the said rendering tends to obscure the meaning greatly."

Now, it is only the one saying of John the Baptist, which the two evangelists, Matthew and Mark record, in different languages, and which is here

complained of. Matthew has this “I indeed baptize you (*“en”*) *with* water—he shall baptize you (*“in”*) *with* the Holy Ghost” iii: 11.

Mark i: 8, “I indeed have baptized you (*“en”*) *with* water, but he shall baptize you (*“en”*) *with* the Holy Ghost.

“Does *“en”* translated *with*, obscure the meaning? We think not.

But let us try the other translation. “I indeed baptize you *“in”* or *“into”* water, but there cometh one after me, He shall baptize you *“in”* or *“into”* the Holy Ghost, and *“into”* fire.” Does this remove the obscurity? Does it not increase it a hundred fold? What! Jesus baptize a man *in* or *into* the Holy Ghost, and *into* fire!! In all the history of the church, who ever heard of such a case? In all the manifold workings of Christian experience, when is the occasion on which Christ baptizes *in*, or *into* the Holy Ghost and *into* fire?

The baptism of Jesus Christ by John, is another place where our Baptist friends gladly avail themselves of our common version, though they abuse it in other places. Matthew iii: 16, it is said, “Jesus after his baptism went up straightway *“apo tou hudatos”* out of the water.” But *“apo* means *from* as well as *“out of,”* as any Greek Lexicon will show. The text read with this rendering, takes off all the immersion gloss, and does not prove one way or the other, in favor of any particular mode of baptism.

There are two other texts, that are used with much effect in this discussion by our Baptist friends, which we must notice. The first is Matt. iii : 5, 6 ; the second John iii : 23. In first, it is said that multitudes went out to John from Jerusalem and Judea, and all the regions of Jordan and were baptized of him *in Jordan*. In the second that he was baptizing *in Enon*, near to Salim. Now these facts have no force in favor of immersion, unless it can be shown that "*en*" translated here *in*, always means *in*. But we have seen that the learned translators of our version, say that it sometimes means "*with*," as any Greek Lexicon will show.

Now then substitute "*with*" for "*in*" and see how they will read. "Then came to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him "*with*" Jordan, i. e. with the water of Jordan. "John was baptizing "*with*" Enon, i. e. with the water of Enon.

Now the texts are stripped of all their immersion appearances, and we have the naked fact of baptism without any allusion to the mode.

On the other hand, it is more than *probable*, nay *almost certain* that Cornelius, Lydia and the Jailor were baptized by sprinkling, because they were baptized in private houses where there were probably no means of immersion, and all the probabilities are in favor of sprinkling in the case of the three thousand of Pentecost, because it was almost impossible with-



out indecent haste, to immerse such a multitude in one day.

Here then, we rest the question of the mode of baptism with the candid reader, satisfied as we are that the truth will not suffer in his hands, after he has impartially and patiently weighed in his mind, the force and bearing of the preceding arguments and facts.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM—THE RIGHT OF INFANT BAPTISM DIVINELY CONFERRED.

1st. Thess. v: 21.—“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

This direction of the inspired apostle has reference to Christian doctrine and practice.

With respect to every thing pertaining to these, which will stand the test of *proof*, i. e. severe investigation, he bids Christians “hold fast.” By implication they are to abandon, to let go every thing that will not stand this test. We are just as much bound to *abandon* what will not stand this test, as we are to “*hold fast*” that which will. The exhortation to “prove all things,” implies a sure rule, by which every thing that professes to be good may be *proved*. That rule is the inspired word. “Search the Scriptures.”

By this, we propose to *prove* what is good, in our Presbyterian views and practice relative to the subjects of Christian baptism.

All evangelical christians agree in this, that for adults, that is, for those grown to years of accountability, the profession of repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus, are necessary prerequisites for baptism.

No man ought to be baptized, unless he professes to repent of all his sins, and exercise a gospel faith.

This it is believed, is the extent of the faith and practice of the Baptist church. Presbyterians go farther than this, and say, not only penitent believers, but their infant offspring ought to be baptized. In other words, we hold the Scripture validity of infant baptism. Our Baptist friends deny it. The single point involved in this discussion then is this, whether infants are entitled to baptism, according to the constitution of the church of the Lord Jesus?

We shall discuss this question in these two aspects:

1st. Test, try, "prove" the practice of infant baptism by the Scriptures of truth.

2nd. Put the objections urged against it to the same severe test, that the people of God may be aided in their efforts to "hold fast that which is good," and let go that which is evil.

1st. Is infant baptism Scriptural? Ought infants of believing parents to be baptized? Yes! and only yes! Why? Because it is in accordance with the whole tenor of Scripture, the spirit and genius of Christianity, and the usage of the church, ever since there has been an organized one upon earth.

How do we know this? Because 1st. The commission our Saviour gave his apostles *includes them*, "Go ye, teach *all nations*, baptizing them." Here

this position is taken, or point made, *that the commission to baptize reaches as far as that to "teach."*

It is not limited by our Saviour, and man has no right to do so. As he laid the obligation upon his apostles to *teach all nations*, so to the same extent, to baptize *all nations*. Now if this is so, we ask would this commission be discharged, this command be obeyed, if they had confined their teaching to the adult population of the nations? Certainly not. Why? Because children are a part of the nations. To teach the nations, they must teach the children of the nations as well as the grown men.

So when they are commanded to baptize the nations, it is no obedience to go and baptize the adult population, and stop there, because the commission does not stop there: it runs farther, and takes in the children. Obedience to any of God's commands to be *proper*, must reach to the extent of the command; any thing else is an attempt to limit God's supremacy, and is of course offensive to him.

As then, to fulfil Christ's command, we must "teach" the children, so to obey his command to baptize, we must baptize the children, because in *both cases* "all nations" includes the children.

2. The children of believers have always been in the covenant with their parents.

Now, whether the covenant in Gen. xvii, be the covenant of grace or circumcision, or both, as we think, it matters not, to this argument; in either

case, it will answer our purpose. How do we know that Abraham was embraced in this covenant? The reply is, he is mentioned in the promise, "I will be a God to thee." Is any body else interested in this covenant? This can only be answered properly by referring to the promise. What then, does the promise say. "And to thy seed." Then the "*seed*," *the children*, are in the covenant with Abraham. If this is so, the covenant is as good *to them* as to Abraham.

Now, that this was God's design, will appear from the fact, that the sign—token of God's outstanding covenant, was put upon the "seed"—the infants of the covenant, as well as upon Abraham himself.

Circumcision, therefore, stands out in all the ages down to Christ and the establishment of the christian church, the *perpetual sign*, witnessing to the fact, that infants *may be in covenant with God*.

That this covenant was the outworking of the covenant of grace, we think we have satisfactorily made to appear, and if so, then by the express command of God, infants were recognised in circumcision, as God's covenant children, capable of inheriting the blessings of the covenant, which were union with Christ, justification, regeneration, sanctification, and eternal life.

But to evade the force of this argument, our Baptist friends say "there were two transactions in which Abraham was a party. The covenant of

grace, confirmed unto him, when he was seventy-five years old.—Gen. xii: 1—4; and the covenant of circumcision made with him when he was ninety years old” (and nine.)—Gen. xvii.

Now, it is asked, why call one of these the covenant of grace, and refuse that title to the other?—Let us examine them, and see if both are not a manifestation of *one* and the *same* covenant. The first contains an account of Abraham’s call to leave his father’s house, and go unto a land of which he knew nothing, coupled with the promise “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” This is all that this transaction contained.

Now, what was this but the breaking out of clearer light from the covenant of grace, fixing the old promise of the “seed of the woman,” in the family of Abraham, and conferring the high distinction upon this servant of God, that Messiah should come out of his loins? And here, in this promise, we find the secret of that marvelous strength of heart and nerve displayed by the man of God on Mt. Moriah, which entitled him, to be called “the father of the faithful.”

All then that this transaction did, was to “preach the gospel” to Abraham by *locating* the Messianic prophecies in his family. This was the view the apostle Paul had of it, for he says “and the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before *the gospel unto Abra-*

ham, saying in thee shall all nations be "blessed." Gal. iii: 8. This, then, according to the apostle, was the "preaching of the gospel unto Abraham," and *as much* and no more the covenant of grace, than the preaching of the gospel now is.

That recorded in Gen. xvii, is a more enlarged transaction, in which the located promise of Messiah on the house of Abraham begins to work in the development of the fact that "*God would be his God, and the God of his seed.*" And now, Abraham having been chosen, called, and separated from the rest of the Princes of his age, and his family selected as that from which Messiah should come, God proceeds to manifest farther his covenant grace, by organizing in his family *his visible church and fixing the visible sign of initiation*, in the circumcision of the flesh.

Here then was when God first organized his church, and circumcision was the door of entrance thereto. Why then call one of these transactions, the covenant of grace, and not the other? The last is certainly a more full manifestation of grace than the first.

But the very admission that the first is a development of the covenant of grace, *necessarily* draws along with it *the fact* that the other is also, and then the *overwhelming* consequence comes down *irresistibly, crushingly* on the system of our Baptist friends that infants were not only in covenant with God, but re-



ceived the sign of circumcision, as a token of their acknowledged church membership.

But lest this should be obscure to some of the people of God, we take another position, and assert

3rd. That the children of believing parents should be baptized, because they were members of the church of God before Christ came, and he neither *by word or act* has ever excluded them.

Now that infants were members of the Jewish Church, and admitted by circumcision is not denied by any, that we are aware of. Mr. Keach, a Baptist minister of no mean repute, says ("Gold refined" page 113,) "That children were admitted members of the Jewish church is granted." So Mr. Booth, vol. 2, page 224. So Mr. Monroe page 33, says: "Not only children, but slaves, were members of the Jewish church by the rite of circumcision." Now we insist upon it, that these admissions give up the point in debate. We submit it to the candid and impartial reader if they do not?

At any rate, if we can show (as we now propose to do) that the Jewish church was the church of God, and the Christian church only a continuation of that, then it will follow that the right of infants to membership therein continues, unless it can be shown that they have been divested of it by *express command of God*.

Was then the Jewish church the church of God? Yes! Certainly it was. Otherwise God had no



church in the world before and through all the existence of the Jewish State as a nationality. But that must have been the church of God, of which the apostle Paul witnesseth when he says, "Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises. Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever, amen?" Rom. ix: 4.

What says our Saviour to those members of the church who had declined from the truth, and refused to acknowledge him as Messiah? Does he deny their church membership? No, not at all. His language is "Verily I say unto you, the *kingdom of God* shall be *taken from you* and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matt. xxi: 43.

The plain meaning here is the church of God which ye have had—his visible kingdom, shall be taken from you and given to the Gentiles.

"There are three things denoted by this taking the kingdom from the Jews and giving it to the Gentiles, 1st. a ceasing of a regular organized church of God, among the Jews. 2nd. A setting up of this church of God taken from the Jews among the Gentiles, and 3rd. a sameness of State among the Gentiles, as among the Jews. The *taking away* and *giving* from one to another imports no change in the thing taken and given, but simply a passing over from the hands of one to those of another."

“Now if we wish to know what the church is to be under the Gentiles, we need only to enquire what it was under the Jews, for in both cases the church was *essentially the same*.

Then as it has been proved and admitted by “Keach,” “Booth,” and “Monroe,” (as quoted above) that the membership in the Jewish church consisted of adults and infants, membership in the Gentile church must consist of adults and infants, for the reason that the “same that was taken away was given,” unless an express alteration in this respect can be shown. And this brings us another step in our argument, which is to prove,

4th. That the coming of Jesus Christ did not narrow or detract any thing from the mercy of God. This it must have done, if any who obtained it under the old dispensation, do not obtain it under the new. But infants obtained mercy to be in covenant with God under the old, and must attain to the same under the new dispensation, or Christ has by his coming limited, narrowed down, and restrained the abounding of that mercy. This cannot be, for in all the ages past, every change in the order of God’s dealings with man, has been in the way of enlargement and progress. One opening dispensation has never gone behind that which has preceded it in the manifestation of God’s love and mercy. Progress is the great law of life and wisdom; and this God has sanctified in the eyes of all intelligences,

by making it the order for developing the fulness and power of the great principles of salvation.

Now that our Saviour did not disregard this law in the days of his flesh, will appear from what is recorded in Mark x: 13, 14, "And they brought young children to him that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them, and when Jesus saw it he was *much displeased*, and said unto them, suffer the *little children* to come unto me, and *forbid them not*, for of such is the kingdom of God." This text is commended to the careful consideration of the reader, for it contains, as we conceive, *proof positive* and *direct* to the point we are handling. Not that our Saviour on this occasion, baptized these "*little children*," but that *he distinctly recognized their membership in the kingdom of God*, and if Christ here asserts for them membership in the kingdom of God, surely they are entitled to that rite of the church by which they are recognized as members thereof.

On this passage Calvin has this, "Inst." B. 4, ch. 16, sec. 7: "For it is not to be passed over, as a thing of little importance, that Christ commanded infants to be brought to him, and added as a reason for this command 'for of such is the kingdom of God.' If it be reasonable for infants to be brought to Christ; why is it not allowed to admit them to baptism—the sign of our communion and fellowship with Christ. If *of them* is the kingdom of God, why should they be denied the sign which opens as

it were, an entrance into the church?" That infants of parents in covenant with God belong to God, and are in covenant with him, will appear from the promise, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed," as well as from the fact that when God commanded his church to be gathered together, he did not permit their "little ones," or even those that "sucked the breast" to be absent. Deut. xxix : 10, 11 ; Joel ii : 16, and of these he says : they "were born unto me." Eze. xvi : 20. Witsius says : "Infants belong to the church ; all who belong to the church have a right to baptism, and as a consequence infants ought to be baptized." "Econ. of Cov." vol. 2, page 437.

5th. The apostle Paul in 1st Cor. vii : 14 represents the children *of one or both believing parents to be "holy."* His language is, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the (believing) wife ; and the unbelieving wife by the husband : else were your children unclean, but *now are they holy.*" This stands as a reason why those in the marriage relation, who had joined the church and had unbelieving companions, should not separate from them. Now he says, their children are "*holy.*" Whether we understand this *literally* or *federally*, it amounts to the same thing in this argument. For if the children of believing parents are *really* holy, they have clearly a right to baptism, which puts them in visible communion with the holy of earth. If they are *federally* holy, (as "Fœdus," means a covenant,) *federally* means to occupy covenant relations, and if

so, then still they have a right to baptism, which is the sign and seal of the covenant in which they are interested.

6th. We have accounts in the Scriptures of whole families being baptized:

“Lydia and her household,” Acts xvi: 15. The Jailor at Philippi, “He and all his straightway.” Acts xvi: 33, and “the household of Stephanas.” 1st. Cor. i: 16. Now upon every principle of reason and common sense, it ought to be taken for granted that in some, or all of these families, there were infants, unless it is proved to the contrary, which never has been done. If there were infants in any of these families, they certainly were baptized.

7th. Infants of believing parents were baptized in all the early ages of the Christian church.

On this point we will content ourselves with citing the opinions of learned, pious and godly men, who were not only qualified to testify on this matter, but whose world-wide reputation gives weight to any witness they may bear. Calvin says, “Infants therefore cannot be deprived of baptism, without a manifest evasion of the divine will. What they (i. e. the opposers of infant baptism) what they circulate among the uninformed multitude, that after the resurrection of Christ, a long series of years passed, in which infant baptism was unknown *is contrary to truth*, for there is *no ancient writer* who does not refer its origin, as *a matter of certainty* to the age of the apostles.” “Inst.” B. 4., ch. 16, sec. 8,

Dr. Jno. Brown says, "Even Pelagius whose learning was considerable, and who had traveled through a great part of the Christian world, whose darling opinions powerfully tempted him to deny infant baptism, *declared* that he had never in all his travels heard of any *who denied* infants' right to baptism." "Divinity" page 538.

The great Augustin; in his book against Pelagius, as quoted by Watson, says: "It hath been the custom of the church *in all ages* to baptize infants." "Divinity," page 364.

The learned Erasmus says: "Infant baptism has been used by the church of God for about *fourteen hundred years*." "Watson's Divinity," p. 364.\*

These, then, are some of the reasons upon which the practice of the Presbyterian church in baptizing her infants rests. It will be seen by the careful and candid reader, that she is well sustained by Scripture, as well as by the brightest names that adorn the pages of the church's history.

Having then *tested* or "proved" as the apostle directs, infant baptism to be *true* and *good*, let us "hold it fast."

---

\* Pietet says: "It is clearly proved from the testimony of Irenæus, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Cyril, and many other writers that infants were baptized: and in the Council held at Carthage A. D. 418, an anathema is pronounced on him who denies that newborn infants ought to be baptized." "Theology," p. 414.

## OBJECTIONS.

We now proceed to notice 2nd. The chief objections urged against infant baptism, and we wish to put these to the same severe test—to “prove” them as the apostle tells us, so that we may “hold fast” to them or let them go, as they shall be sustained or not by sound reason and the word of God.

1st. It is said there is no “*express command*” for baptizing infants.

This is not denied. But we cannot see that there is any need for an express command for a rite like this, which basing itself on the covenant of God, signs and seals the rights with which that covenant invests them. Besides there is an express command for circumcising infants, and as we have abundantly shown, that baptism comes in the place of this, and holds the same relation to the covenant, the express command to circumcise, amounts to an express command to baptize. *There was no need* for an express command for admitting infants to covenant privileges which they had enjoyed from time immemorial.

On the other hand, we have a right to call for an express provision on the part of God, showing that under the Gospel, he has divested our children of covenant rights, which all the children of believers have enjoyed from Abraham down to the coming of Christ.

Now is it not a principle recognized and acted



on by all bodies in which legislative power resides, that in amending laws, altering charters, and changing constitutions, all of the old remains in full force except that which *is expressly changed* by public enactment, or by unavoidable implication?

So if it be contended that God has changed the laws of his house, we ask how? When? Where? We ask to be pointed to the amending act, and the clause specified which changes the old law. If this cannot be done, we must hold to the old covenant constitution, which has guaranteed and perpetuated our church rights and those of our children.

But before our Baptist brethren can fairly avail themselves of this objection, they must show their *sincerity* by their *consistency* in observing the rule they would lay on us. Now do they do this? Let us see. They observe the *Christian Sabbath*; have they any *express* command for this? If they have, let them show it. They preach the gospel on the Sabbath day, this is the *great business* to which they devote it; any *express* command for this? If there is, let them show it. They admit females to the Lord's table; is there any *express* command for this? If there is, let them show it. Now let them be consistent, and abandon the observance of the *Christian Sabbath*, give up making that a day of pulpit labor, and cease admitting females to the Lord's table, or give up their persistent stickling about an *express* command for infant baptism.

2nd. It is said there is "no express instance of infant baptism," in all the New Testament.

"If the reader will find recorded the baptism of one infant, we will consider the point settled forever."

Thus at one time, they want an *express command*, and at another an *express instance*.

But this *express* mode of reasoning will not do. If strictly applied, it will destroy the very church itself. If we are to do nothing but what we have an express command for, a large part of our duty will be left undone; and if we are to believe nothing but what we have an *express example of*, a great part of our creed will be undermined.

To illustrate this we give the following example. It is agreed on all hands that the rite of circumcision on the eighth day was instituted in the family of Abraham, and that it was practiced to the time of John the Baptist. Now if the fact that there is no express example of infant baptism is a sufficient reason for its rejection, then it will reject female communion, and *oblige those who use it thus* to deny that there was any such rite as *infant circumcision on the eighth day* among the Jews; for we are very much mistaken if there is an *express instance* of this in all the Bible history from Abraham to John the Baptist. It will also *drive* them into the error of asserting that many of the churches of the apostles did not practice the rite of baptism;

that they neither baptized adults nor infants; for there is no *express example* of any baptism at all, either in the church of Antioch, or Iconium, or Rome, or Thessalonica, or Colosse. And because there is no express example, are we prepared to assert that there was no baptism in any of these churches? Surely a principle that leads to such extremes as these, ought to be abandoned—a principle that thus flies in the face of the common sense of mankind, which asserts that there is no use in giving express examples of what is altogether common, ought to be given up.

3rd. It is urged that infants ought not to be baptized, because they cannot exercise faith and repentance. “Now we solemnly pledge ourselves that if our brethren will only produce one single text from the New Testament, where it is said that infants can and do exercise faith and love, then we will take the little ones and baptize them.” “Faith and Baptism,” page 93.

This whole objection proceeds upon the false hypothesis, that it is faith and repentance which *entitle* one to baptism, whereas *it is the covenant relation man sustains to God which gives him this right.*

Faith and repentance are prerequisites to baptism *only* as they show in their outworkings, that a man sustains this *covenant relation*. *Any farther than this*, they have no bearing upon the question. And even here, they can be made a test no farther *than*

*they will apply* ; but they do not apply to infants, therefore they can never be made a test of their qualifications.

The Baptist argument here would be good against infants, if there was no covenant running before the rite of baptism, but as there is, upon which the rite itself is based, and from which it derives all its meaning, it is necessarily unsound.

The reason why faith and repentance are prerequisites, is because they are a part of the blessings of the covenant, and being possessed by a man, they show that he is in the covenant and therefore entitled to its sign.

Now faith and repentance can no more be made a test of infants' right to the sign of the covenant, than the possession by a grown man of a portion of a father's estate determines the right of minor heirs. His right to a portion of the estate of a dead father, determines on the provisions of his will, and the right of minor heirs rests upon the provisions of that same will. Suppose this elder brother to adopt the argument of our Baptist brethren, and see to what it would lead. He says to himself, "the law requires two things as prerequisites before any one shall come into personal possession of landed property, and these are a sound mind and mature years. My younger brothers and sisters have no right to any of the property because they have not the prerequisites the law requires. I will therefore exclude

them, and appropriate to myself all the estate." What would the law say to such a man if he proceeded to act upon this reasoning? Why just this, "If you want to know the right of minor heirs, you must not contrast their present circumstances with yours, but look to the will of your father; are they mentioned in the will? If so, then they inherit with you, and though like you, they may not have come into possession, yet in due time they will."

We have little patience with that infatuation which leads some to do all they can to disinherit the minor heirs of our father's covenanted estate. The tender babes—the "*brephe*"—"infants on the breasts" whom Jesus our dear elder Brother loved so well before he left us, strangers in this strange world, of these he said, my Father loves them, "of such is the kingdom of heaven,"—save them, take care of them, guard their rights, train them up for God.

The objection reaches too far; for it not only *disinherits* the minor heirs of the covenant, but consigns them to everlasting bankruptcy and ruin. *It leaves them without the inheritance of life.*

The argument, if it means anything, runs thus, faith and repentance are necessary to baptism, but infants cannot exercise faith and repentance, therefore infants should not be baptized. Let us try the argument in another shape, and see if it does not lead to the results above asserted: faith and repentance are necessary to salvation, but infants cannot

exercise faith and repentance, therefore infants cannot be saved.

Now can any body tell why this argument should not be as good in one of these cases as in the other? He who adopts it, ought in consistency to follow it, where it goes; and then what becomes of the salvation of infants?

If our Baptist friends will press it against the baptism of infants, let them follow it. It will not do for them to say here that they do not adopt this conclusion, but believe that all infants, dying in infancy, are saved through the atonement of Christ; *for the two cannot stand together*. To preserve consistency, one or the other must be given up. Either the *argument or the opinion*. Which will our Baptist brethren prefer? The author of "Faith and Baptism" seems inclined to hold on to the argument, and let the dear children go. On page 42, after quoting the text, "I am the vine, ye are the branches," he asks "if Christ is the true and living Vine, and believers upon him are the living branches, can there be any *conceivable advantage* in grafting a lifeless, withered branch into this sacred and holy vine; and more especially, as such grafting can only be a mere profession, and not a reality?"

Here infants and believers are contrasted. Believers are "*living branches*," infants are *lifeless, withered* branches, and to graft such by baptism into the living vine, would be attended with no con-



*ceivable advantage.* This passage contains *two* very grave inaccuracies. In *theology and in fact*, it is unsound. Men are never grafted into the "living vine" by baptism. If they are not grafted in *before that*, you cannot put them in *by that*. Baptism is not a converting ordinance. It *seals* this grace, but never *confers* it.

So much for the theology. Now for the fact. Infants are "*dead, withered*" branches. They are not "*branches*" at all. They are *living buds* upon the *living* branches, already grafted into the living vine, and hold the same relation to the vine, Christ Jesus, that their living parent branches do.

Hence, God says, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed." Hence, Peter, "the promise is to you and to your children." But, if we grant that they are "lifeless branches," then there are two difficulties in the way of our Baptist brethren in making out their salvation, which to us, seem absolutely insurmountable. The first is this, if they are "lifeless branches," then the apostle directly asserts that such "are fit only to be burned," and dying in infancy, they must be lost. This saying of the apostle holds them in fetters as remorseless as fate. The second is this, the apostle teaches in Romans, that there is no "grafting into the living vine, Jesus Christ, but by *faith*," and they say infants cannot exercise faith. Then, there is no grafting in for them, and dying in infancy, they must perish. Thus it appears



that that system of religious teaching, which cuts off our infants from baptism, sustains itself upon principles which, if rigidly adhered to, would cut them off from life.

The reader is specially desired to notice that we do not say that any of our Baptist brethren *directly teach* that infants, dying in infancy, are lost. What we assert is this, that that system, which ignores the covenant which gives to baptism its significance—which destroys the standing of infants in that covenant, makes no provision for its children in the way of church rites until they arrive at adult years, virtually *disfranchises them*, and leaves them to God's "*uncovenanted mercy*," (which by the way, is no mercy at all) to wander and stumble upon the dark mountains of sin.

On the other hand, how beautiful and harmonious is that system of revealed truth which, basing itself upon God's everlasting covenant of grace, fetches the meaning of all church rites, from that covenant—judges of the fitness of church members by the relations they sustain to the covenant—takes the oversight of the rising generations—binds all its adult members to recognise their infants as the children of the church, and to unite together in prayers, teaching, and example, to train them for God and heaven.

Reader, we love the Presbyterian church, and we challenge for her, a part of your regard. We love

her, because she teaches us that our children are the Lord's—that we are not alone in our affection for them, but that the God of the covenant regards them with a higher, purer, holier interest than we do.—Because, no sooner are children born unto us, than she makes it our duty to bring them to her, that the baptismal water may be put upon them, and thus their right to the blessings of the covenant, be sealed unto them, and over their young heads rise the united prayers of God's people, in their behalf.—We love the Presbyterian church because, while on the one hand she exacts of us public vows of faithfulness to our children's spiritual interests, she at the same time imposes an obligation upon every member to pray for them, and co-operate with us, in seeking their salvation.

We love the Presbyterian church, not simply because she has borne her banner gallantly upon the high places of the earth, and sustained it floating in the winds, amid the monuments of heathenism, but because, inscribed upon its ample folds, wherever it floats, are the tokens of her love, for her own dear children. We love the Presbyterian church because, whether in christian or heathen lands, like a wise and loving mother, she sends forth every child of hers to the great battle of life, inscribed with the sign of the covenant, and pledged to the cause of humanity, religion, and God.

And now, dear reader, if you have had patience

to follow us through the windings of our argument, may your reward be, more enlarged views of the covenant. If you are a child of God, hold fast to the rights he has conferred, that you may be prepared to bear your part, in the coming coronation of the Great Mediator of the Covenant of Life.















